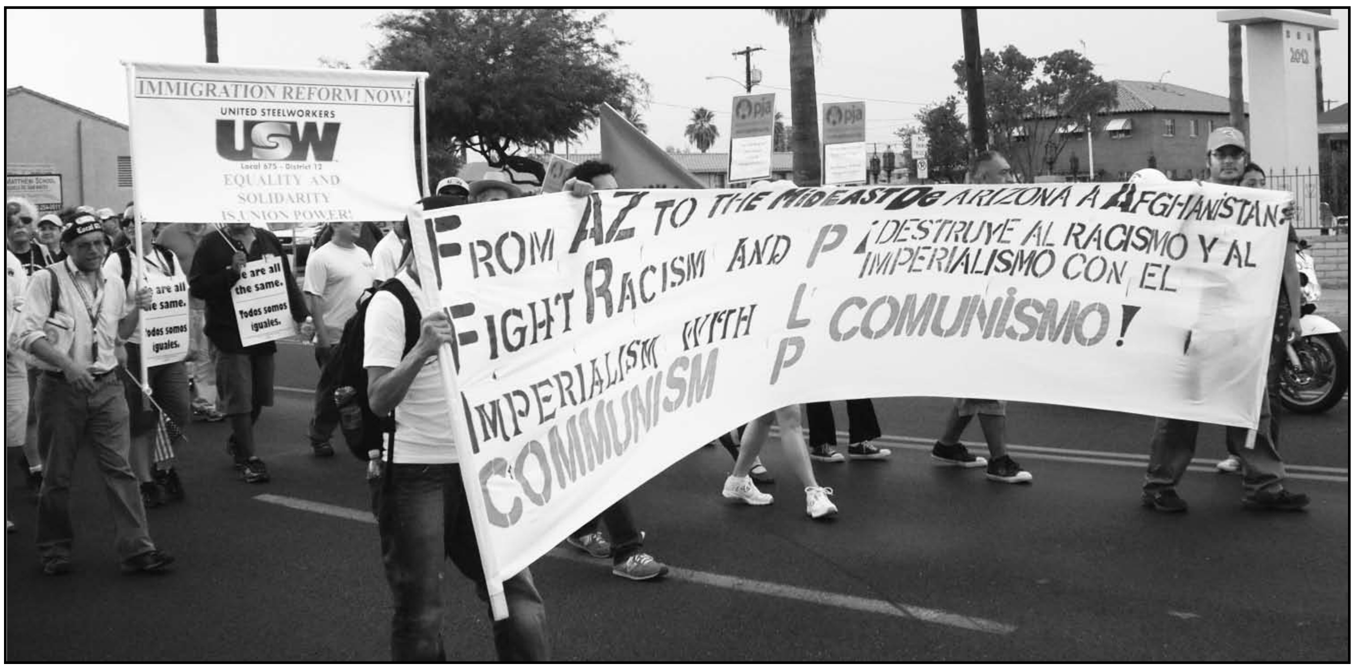
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CHALLENGE

FIGHT FOR COMMUNISM • LUCHE POR EL COMUNISMO • PLP

THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

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Smash All Borders!

Rallies Rip Racist Arizona Law

PHOENIX, AZ, July 29 — On the day Arizona's racist anti-immigrant law SB 1070 was scheduled to take effect, Progressive Labor Party participated in a march to the state capitol building carrying a banner that read "From Arizona to Afghanistan, fight racism and imperialism with communism!"

A federal judge placed an injunction on some of SB 1070's provisions, which require local Arizona cops to check for immigration status. Protests were still ongoing in Los Angeles and Arizona, as the injunction changes very little on the ground.

In Los Angeles nearly 200 protesters blocked an intersection near the headquarters of a company that does business with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention centers, and in Arizona several dozen protestors were arrested in front of the racist Sheriff Joe Arpaio's downtown Phoenix office. Arpaio denounced the injunction and vowed to carry on the raids that have terrorized the immigrant community in Arizona. The day of actions culminated in a march and rally in front of Arizona's state capitol, continuing the more than 100-day vigil to protest SB1070.

In the bus caravan to Arizona organized by the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, PLP put forward the connection between immigration reform and ruling-class efforts to build support for their imperialist wars in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

At a community forum organized in a local Phoenix church, PL'ers sat with a group of law students who participated as legal observers. We talked about how the DREAM Act was being supported by the Obama administration, the Pentagon, and Democrats to create the illusion that U.S. capitalism can meet the needs of working-class immigrant youth. One of the law students agreed, pointing out that only a very few undocumented immigrant youths are able to afford college, and since the DREAM Act does not make them eligible for financial aid , they will have to consider other options. Besides two years of college, the second option, or "pathway to citizenship" offered by the DREAM Act is joining the U.S. ruling class's imperialist army. Their immigration reform is actually a call for workers and troops for imperialist war.

During the march to the Arizona state capitol, the PL contingent carried a red flag in contrast to the many U.S. flags distributed at the union-sponsored event. PL'ers led chants including, "queremos un mundo sin fronteras, tendremos un mundo sin fronteras! ("We want a world without borders, we will have a world without borders!") and "working people have no nation, smash racist deportations!" One of the main organizers of the event became visibly upset with the PL contingent because it was leading anti-racist cop chants, twisting the vague chant of "no justice no peace," and adding to it "no racist police!" Later, one of the same law students, now acting as a legal observer, approached a PL'er and expressed her approval for our leading militant anti-racist cop chants.

Injunction or not, during crisis time blatant racism is on the rise as capitalists need scapegoats. We can see this with the raids and traps conducted in Arizona: "jaywalking? Show me your papers." Other examples include the recent ICE raid of a factory in Southern California, as well as the proposal to "ban" immigrants from a town in South Carolina. Every night Spanish-language media use these news items to make the case for "comprehensive immigration reform" and the DREAM Act, but as CHALLENGE has repeatedly pointed out, immigration reform is not the answer; communist revolution is.

PLP's presence was important, placing the debate on immigration within the context of the needs of U.S. capitalism and imperialism. We called for workers to smash borders and build international, working-class solidarity in the struggle for a communist world. Finally, it gave PL'ers plenty to talk about in the near future with old and new friends who participated in these protests. ✪

U.S. Rulers Use Wikileaks Media Circus to Plan Wider War

When U.S. rulers hype old news from Afghanistan, one has to wonder what's really happening. The NY Times, a leading ruling-class mouthpiece, treated the recent Wikileaking of old Afghan war documents from the Bush, Jr. era as a blockbuster exposé. In June 2010, the Pentagon re-released a 2007 geological study identifying a trillion-dollar Afghan treasure trove of minerals. Hardly breaking news, these sudden front-page "revelations" reflect major policy disputes within the capitalist class.

Phony Peacenik Wikileaks Aids War-Makers' Planning

Wikileaks is by no means anti-war (see box). Rather it focuses ruling-class and public attention on the unresolved question of what form of murder best serves U.S. imperialism in Afghanistan. The rulers have two main choices, counterinsurgency or counterterrorism:

• Counter-insurgency amounts to full-scale, vastly expensive colonial occupation that subjugates the entire population, largely through the deadly seizure of cities;

• Counter-terrorism, less costly and perhaps less effective for U.S. invaders, targets suspected al Qaeda and Taliban leaders and allies for assassination in hopes that the rank and file will see the pro-U.S. light.

Wikileaks' 92,000 dumped memos disclose long-known facts bearing on this debate: U.S. and allied forces have killed thousands of Afghan civilians, thus unintentionally swelling pro-Taliban sentiment; since 2001, the U.S. has employed Special Operations death squads; U.S. "ally" Pakistan aids the Afghan Taliban; and U.S. puppet Afghan ruler Karzai is crooked and unreliable.

Obama & Co. waver on Afghan tactics. Obama at first stressed counter-insurgency with his 30,000-soldier surge. Now with U.S. forces stretched close to the breaking point, counter-terrorism seems to reign in the White House. Richard Haass, president of the Rockefeller-led Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the leading U.S. imperialist think-tank, wrote in Newsweek (7/18/10): "The military price [for counter-insurgency in Afghanistan] is also great, not just in lives and material but also in distraction, at a time when the United States could well face crises with Iran and North Korea."

Wikileaks, emphasizing obstacles to nation-building, justifies the rulers' current shift away from old-style colonialism towards assassination. The Times (8/1/10) reports, "Eight months later, that counterinsurgency strategy has shown little success, as demonstrated by the flagging military and civilian operations in Marja and Kandahar and the spread of Taliban influence in other areas of the country. Instead, what has turned out to work well is an approach American officials have talked much less about: counterterrorism, military-speak for the targeted killings of insurgents from Al Qaeda and the Taliban."

Naked U.S. War-makers Feel A Draft

But there's an even bigger war story the bosses can't put on the front page or in prime time because they haven't yet won the working class, or their own class, to the unity and sacrifice needed for wider conflict. It concerns the rulers' covert plans to restore the draft and militarize industry, if fighting extends beyond Iraq and Afghanistan. The recently-issued "Final Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review Independent Panel," ordered by Congress, has buried it on page 64:

"[T]he Panel is concerned that an expansion of the [military] force might be necessary in response to an unexpected attack; to support a longer term, more intensive combat circumstance than Iraq and Afghanistan; or perhaps operations on a third front. While the nation has a Selective Service System, we don't see that it has a matching plan even in concept to train and equip an expansion of either conscripts or volunteers and recommend that such a concept plan be prepared. The industrial base has long been a concern and while we should not prop up businesses that cannot survive on their own, neither should we be without the ability to ramp up production in response to crisis."

Military Focus on Afghan Pipeline? Or on Minerals?

Afghanistan's newly-trumpeted mineral wealth underscores another policy quandary for U.S. rulers. Should the main economic goal of U.S.-led military efforts be to secure the proposed Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline, or should it be to secure access to Afghan iron, copper and lithium?

Geography plays a role as crucial as politics here. If absolute U.S. control of TAPI is paramount, Obama must lead the U.S. war machine in counter-insurgency to forcibly seize the southern, Taliban-dominated Afghan provinces of Kandahar and Helmand through which TAPI will run. TAPI has important ramifications in the sharpening inter-imperialist rivalry. "India has recently reaffirmed its interest in progressing with the TAPI pipeline project. Considerations other than commercial may be contributing to this [such as] countering the expanding presence of China in Central Asia." ("Journal of Energy Security," 7/26/10)

Minerals, however, lie in abundance in Afghanistan's northern, western and eastern regions, according to a 2004-2007 study by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) publicized this June by the Defense Department. These findings alter U.S. imperialism's troop-basing requirements.

CFR's Haass suggests (Newsweek article) a "de facto partition of Afghanistan. Under this approach, the United States would accept Taliban control of the Pashtun-dominated south so long as the Taliban did not welcome back Al Qaeda and did not seek to undermine stability in non-Pashtun areas of the country. If the Taliban violated these rules, the United States would attack them with bombers, drones, and Special Forces. U.S. economic and military support would continue to flow to non-Pashtun Afghans in the north and west of the country." Haass needn't mention the east, the border with Pakistan, Osama bin Laden's hideaway, which gets permanent U.S. attention.

Haass's redeployment scheme is consistent with both Wikileaks and the Pentagon/USGS. Minerals may, in fact, hold greater importance for U.S. bosses. The report calls Afghanistan the Saudi Arabia of lithium, an essential ingredient in batteries from cell phones to electric cars. And the exploding economy of U.S. competitor China needs iron and copper.

Workers shouldn't fall for the Wikileakers' fake pacifism. To effectively oppose U.S. wars with Iraqi, Afghan, Iranian and Chinese or other bosses, we must destroy the profit system which creates this deadly imperialist rivalry. Smashing capitalism will take a communist revolution, which is why we strive to bring this understanding to the rank and file in the shops and unions, in the schools and military, churches and other mass organizations. Such is our Party's ultimate goal. ✪

Wikileaks: Another Liberal Rulers' Mouthpiece

Wikileaks didn't fall from the sky. Its mastermind Julian Assange sports a lengthening liberal imperialist pedigree. In June, a profile in the ultra-liberal, Establishment New Yorker magazine canonized him as a quirky but supremely well intentioned truth seeker. Assange and pals were front-runners for a $500,000 grant from the Knight Foundation whose president, Alberto Ibarguen, sits on the board of the Council on Foreign Relations, the top U.S. imperialist think tank. Knight eventually turned Assange down, but only when dealing with the Times proved far more lucrative to liberal rulers in terms of public opinion. The Rockefeller-led liberal cabal of National Public Radio, Public Broadcasting System, and Corporation for Public Broadcasting have become, through their grantees Radio Pacifica and its "Democracy Now" program, the main media defenders of Assange and his Army intelligence mole Private Bradley Manning.

OUR FIGHT

✯Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.

✯Only the dictatorship of the working class — communism — can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today's world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.

✯Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world's workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.

✯While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.

✯Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. Everyone will share in society's benefits and burdens.

✯Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of "race." Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit black, Latino, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.

✯Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women — sexism — and divisive gender roles created by the class society.

✯Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

✯Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion's false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.

✯Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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Why Articles Are Not Signed

The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP's criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a "following" around any particular individual. While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual's writing of an article.

Must Destroy Capitalism to Get It:

D.C. Workers Seize Gov't Land, Demand Affordable Housing

WASHINGTON, D.C., July 10 — Over 100 workers occupied a vacant parcel of government-owned land and erected a tent city, demanding that the government keep its promise to build affordable housing there and throughout the city instead of catering to the needs of the rich. This action was led by a community-based organization Organizing Neighborhood Equity (ONE DC) and included members and friends of PLP who understand that the demands will not be met without a revolution.

Capitalism is a racist system, with the riches of the bosses coming from increasing the poverty of the workers. This is clear in the housing conditions faced by the world's working class. In the U.S., millions are ill-housed and hundreds of thousands are actually homeless, including many workers whose jobs pay so little that they can't afford housing at all!

The History of Parcel 42

As in every arena of exploitation, the working class fights back and resists its dehumanization by the bosses. The battle against gentrification and for decent affordable housing shows this resistance, both overt and subterranean.

For 15 years, D.C. has seen the steady erosion of affordable housing and the encroachment of high-priced condominiums in many historically black working-class neighborhoods. The city has housing waiting lists for 26,000 households and 700 people living with AIDS. Rich developers working with their politicians have created this racist, anti-working class process. The previous mayor, Anthony Williams, declared that he wanted to bring in 100,000 new residents to the District, with the clear message that these would be well-to-do professionals who would increase the tax base.

Meanwhile affordable housing eroded and was replaced by housing for the rich. This was nowhere as evident as in the Shaw and U Street neighborhoods, where hundreds of condos costing $400,000-$800,000 each have been erected overlooking the historic U Street's "Black Broadway," the center of black entertainment during the period of Jim Crow and racial segregation. The current mayor, Adrian Fenty, intensified this gentrification process while paying lip service to expanding affordable housing. He occasionally endorsed "community benefits agreements" that require developers to include a certain percentage of affordable units in new residential construction to gain city support.

One example was the mayor's negotiation with ONE DC over Parcel 42, a now-vacant piece of land that previously housed a city-run community health clinic. ONE DC argued that residential development on that parcel should include affordable housing, with some rents or mortgages low enough so that very low-income households (earning less than $25,000 annually) could live there. Then the Mayor changed his mind. All units would be priced for people making about $50,000, with no provision for the housing needs of lower-income workers.

Workers Seize the Parcel

So ONE DC and its allies decided that direct action was needed to mobilize opposition to what they saw as a betrayal by the Mayor. At the end of its annual block party, ONE DC led workers to Parcel 42, surrounded it and then seized it! This was a bold act of working-class resistance to the deepening crisis of capitalism. At the seizure rally, several local residents declared that they had lost their homes due to rent increases and job loss and could no longer live in the community they grew up in.

ONE DC established a tent city on the site in a matter of minutes and placed large signs on the fence around it, declaring that the parcel now belonged to the community and that affordable housing was needed throughout the city. Police threatened to tear down the tents and arrest the "trespassers," but ultimately backed down due to the politically sensitive nature of such an action in the run-up to the election.

Management illegally threatened nearby low-income residents in subsidized housing with eviction if they joined the occupation. But as we go to press, the occupation continues and the bold signs remain in place.

Where will this struggle go from here? Some activists are calling for more seizures of city land and establishing sustainable "intentional communities." Others are calling for putting more pressure on the local politicians to support affordable housing. PLP'ers argue that, while bold actions are good, we should have no illusions about the lying politicians of all stripes or about the limits of this direct action struggle. The bosses will order the police to smash this effort if they feel threatened, so we must use this experience to become steeled for the long haul of communist revolution. As Engels noted in 1872 (see box), the housing crisis of the working class can only be solved by workers smashing the state, seizing the leadership of society and re-organizing it to meet workers' needs.

PLP's work in the housing struggles was on display with several members and friends participating in the block party and the rally. These students have been active in the struggle for housing for patients with HIV/AIDS and several have been involved in PLP study groups. The next step is for friends of the PLP in the housing struggle to become anti-racist, communist members of the PLP to strengthen the long-range ability of the working class to seize power through revolution. ✪

'Every City Has One or More Slums...'

In 1844, Friedrich Engels, the co-author of the Communist Manifesto, wrote of the despicable housing conditions that early capitalism foisted on the young proletariat: "Every great city has one or more slums, where the working class is crowded together. True, poverty often dwells in hidden alleys close to the palaces of the rich; but, in general, a separate territory has been assigned to it, where, removed from the sight of the happier classes, it may struggle along as it can (The Condition of the English Working Class in 1844.)

In 1872, in a debate with German socialists who believed that capitalism could be reformed to improve housing, Engels forcefully argued that, "[Only by] the abolition of the capitalist mode of production is the solution of the housing question made possible." (The Housing Question). The same analysis applies today!

Jewish, Palestinian Daycare Workers Unite vs. Israeli Bosses

JERUSALEM, JULY 21 — Over 700 striking daycare workers — who have recently unionized in the "Workers' Power" union federation — demonstrated in front of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. The workers, Jewish and Palestinian women from all parts of Israel/Palestine, fought for workers' control over regulations, a living wage and normal working conditions.

The "family" daycare system, first created in the 1980's, was an attempt by the Israeli government to provide subsidized daycare facilities for children up to the age of 3, using small groups hosted at the workers' homes rather than in an ordinary kindergarten. This service is especially valuable for impoverished families where both parents work but cannot pay the steep prices of private daycare.

However, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, which operates this system, has essentially privatized it, transferring its funds to the hands of local operators instead of paying the workers directly. The Ministry, as well as the local operators, have found a way to super-exploit these daycare workers: instead of being employed directly by either the Ministry or the operators, and thus entitled to a full wage and benefits, they are technically treated as "freelance contractors" and paid a flat monthly sum.

Capitalist Sexist Exploitation

These women work up to 12 hours a day, 6 days a week, yet earn less than 4,000 NIS (about $1,000) a month! And even that low wage is subject to payment delays. Additionally, these workers have to pay their operational costs out of their own pockets, and are constantly harassed by new regulations by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, regulations that often require them to spend more of their meager income on various safety features.

Faced with such brutal exploitation, the daycare workers decided to unionize in 2008 as part of the "Workers' Power" union federation. Today, after two years of organizing, the union includes approximately 1,000 out of the 2,400 "family" daycare workers in Israel/Palestine. The workers, both Jewish and Palestinian women, are fighting for direct employment by the Ministry rather than the exploitative "freelancer" scam, for a living wage and benefits, for the payment of operation costs by the Ministry, and for workers' control over the various regulations.

The Ministry and the local bosses first tried to ignore the union, and then moved to more aggressive methods against it, including the delaying of pay and the firing of several workers. Additionally, in the town of Elad, some women who were religious Jews were threatened with excommunication unless they leave the union; this has led several workers to withdraw from the union. This is a classic example of the role of religion as one of the bosses' weapons against the working class.

Faced with these repressive steps, workers are fighting back nonetheless, demonstrating and striking against the bosses, and are trying to expand their union.

However, even if this reform struggle is won by the workers, the capitalist Israeli government will undoubtedly try to erode its achievements and rob the workers once again. Only a workers' communist revolution and the seizure of state power by the working class will ensure good working conditions for all workers as well as free, high-quality daycare and education for all children. PLP is spreading our ideas among these workers, as well as building a base for our Party. ✪

No Debate Here: More Wars = More School Cuts, Means Fight-back Needed

In the coming school year thousands of high school students will be debating the pros and cons of removing U.S. troops from bases in South Korea, Japan, Turkey, Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan.

But don't be fooled: nobody in the ruling class is debating troop *withdrawals*. They're debating *re-deployments*. There's a long-lasting and broad consensus among political and military elites that U.S. imperialism must remain dominant in the Middle East. This consensus, persisting since World War II, was boldly and publicly expressed in president Jimmy Carter's warning to the USSR when the latter entered Afghanistan in 1979:

The U.S. Case for Control of Oil

"The region…now threatened by Soviet troops in Afghanistan is of great strategic importance: It contains more than two-thirds of the world's exportable oil.…Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and…will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."

This is the Carter Doctrine. No president since Carter has renounced it, and none ever will. Those U.S. troops who've departed Iraq have headed to Afghanistan. Air strikes have killed untold numbers in Pakistan and Yemen, both of which (along with Somalia) are repeatedly announced as the "next" targets in an ongoing "long war" against "terror."

There are no withdrawals, only shifts from one target to the next and back again in a treadmill of invasion, occupation and escalation. This is the general trend of inter-imperialist rivalry in the Middle East.

"Terrorism" constantly emerges in high school debates but, as in the general U.S. population, is poorly understood and riddled with anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism. U.S. imperialism is the world's greatest terrorist threat. The British medical journal Lancet placed invasion-caused Iraqi casualties at a conservative 600,000. Remote-controlled drone missile strikes and commando Special Forces raids have slaughtered thousands in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This is terrorism.

However, the so-called "insurgents" who resist U.S. invasion are hardly better than the invaders. Local bosses, cloaked in the guise of radical Islam, simply want Arab control of Arab oil profits, wrenched from the exploitation of "their" workers.

Turn the Guns on the Exploiters

The young men (and increasingly young women) pointing weapons at each other in Iraq, Afghanistan and beyond have much more in common with each other than with the bosses and generals who send them off to die. From the Middle East to the U.S., unemployment forces the youth into the military. These young people need to turn their guns on their exploiters as revolutionary soldiers did in Russia and then in China, in a communist seizure of power.

Currently, imperialists, whether U.S., European, Russian or Chinese, tend to pick on smaller powers. But rivalry between the imperialists will intensify and sooner or later will erupt in open conflict, leading to world war. Only communist revolution can chase the imperialists from power. Workers' power abolishes capitalist competition for profits which lies behind inter-imperialist rivalry and war.

This coming school year thousands of student debaters will join tens of millions of their peers in facing the most vicious budget cuts public schools have suffered in our time. Unemployment continues at sky-high levels for tens of millions of workers. Meanwhile, profits climb; corporations sit on over a trillion dollars, waiting for the most profitable time to invest. They refuse to rehire the workers they discarded like so much trash in recent years.

The money from corporate profiteering and imperialist war expenses could restore every single budget cut to every school, send everyone to college and provide everybody with a job and a home. But that's not how capitalism operates. The "National Priorities Project" website, totally lacking in class analysis, can provide a sense of the dollar amounts involved.

Connect the Dots

The challenge now for all students, teachers and parents is to organize fight-back, not merely to restore school funding (though a start) but must connect the cuts to the wars. After all, even fully-funded schools will still only lie to us about the wars. U.S. capitalism, partly to help pay the trillions of dollars spent on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, is moving to squeeze ever more profits out of the working class.

But awareness alone, while important, is insufficient. We need to build a movement to smash the system that makes these cuts and these wars increasingly intense. We must smash racist notions that place more value on the lives of U.S. soldiers than on our working-class brothers and sisters overseas. CHALLENGE will continue as a resource of timely, accurate and class-conscious news about world events and class struggles against the bosses and their system. Student debaters should use CHALLENGE articles for discussion in team practices. Building a stronger communist movement is winning the "insurgency" to capitalism's endless chamber of horrors. Join PLP! ✪

China, U.S., Japan, Russia: Suicide Surge Universal Under Capitalism

The Foxconn plant in China, which assembles iPads among other things, has made headlines recently with its incredibly high rate of worker suicides. Working for $132 per month, Foxconn workers are on their feet on the job for 12 hours a day, six days a week. Conversing with coworkers is strictly forbidden and bathroom breaks are relegated to ten minutes every two hours.[1]

One worker described how his favorite activity was dropping stuff because squatting down to pick up the object is the only way to get any rest.[2] Another worker said of his job, "Every day, I repeat the same thing I did yesterday. We get yelled at all the time… Life is meaningless." A worker suffering from insomnia simply stated, "I feel no sense of achievement, I've become a machine."[3]

Foxconn employs nearly 600,000 workers at its Shenzhen facility, almost all of which are young migrants from the Chinese countryside.[4] "Hukou" (Household Registration System) laws make internal migration in China illegal. These laws deny migrant workers access to any social services and the risk of deportation back to the countryside makes them especially vulnerable to exploitation.[5] In the city of Shenzhen super-exploited migrant workers make up over 80% of the population.[6]

As tragic as the story at Foxconn is it is hardly unique in the new China. A 2007 article in the China Daily noted that 287,000 people kill themselves in China each year. It has become the leading cause of death for people between ages 15 and 34. A study done by Peking University found that 20% of Chinese high school students considered committing suicide and 6.5% had made plans to do so.[7]

The current economic downturn has only exacerbated the issue. In 2009 the London Telegraph reported that suicides were surging among Chinese college graduates. They connected this rise in suicides to the fact that one-third of graduates are unable to find work after graduation.[8]

Suicide and Capitalist Economy are Connected

The link between suicides and the capitalist economic system has long been acknowledged. A 1976 Congressional report in the U.S. even commented that, "The national rate of suicide in the U.S. can be viewed as an economic indicator."[9] A recent study from Oxford University confirmed this finding that a 3% raise in unemployment resulted in a 4.5% raise in the suicide rate.[10]

Indeed in the U.S. the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline reported an 18% increase in phone calls in early 2010.[11] And the BP Gulf oil spill that destroyed the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of people has also now seen a corresponding increase in suicides on the Gulf Coast.[12]

The linkage between suicide and capitalism seems to be a universal one. The Aokigahara Forest in Japan has become known as the "suicide forest" due to the large numbers of people who have gone there to kill themselves. In 2009 Japan saw a 15% increase in suicides over the previous year. One man who attempted to kill himself in the forest after losing his job stated, "My will to live disappeared. I'd lost my identity, so I didn't want to live on this earth. That's why I went here."[13]

Fall of Communism Leads Workers to Despair

The harsh working conditions, long hours, and terrible wages brought on by China's reversion to capitalism are only part of the suicide puzzle there. Another factor not discussed by the Western news media is the despair brought on by the fall of communism in China.

The connection between the collapse of communism and worker suicides is most evident in the former Soviet Union. According to the World Health Organization the five highest suicide rates in the world all belong to former Soviet states (Belarus, Lithuania, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Hungary).[14] The dissolution of the Soviet Union led to a surge in suicides in Russia that began in the mid-1980s leading one World Health Organization official to state, "The reasons are complex but the suicide rate is obviously linked to social and economic disintegration."[15]

Along with having the third highest suicide rate in the world, Russia also has the highest rate of alcoholism in the world. Recently the Russian Public Chamber reported that 500,000 Russians die every year from alcohol abuse.[16] The combination of alcohol abuse and suicide has helped to lower the life expectancy of Russian men to 59, causing Pravda to remark that Russian men are becoming "extinct."[17]

Nets Won't Save Chinese Workers

Embarrassed by the suicide scandal Foxconn has devised a plan to increase pay by 20% and has begun installing anti-suicide nets around all the worker dormitories (most workers have committed suicide by jumping from buildings).[18] Workers have even been forced by management to sign pledges not to kill themselves.[19]

Despite these measures the suicides at Foxconn continue.[20] One worker who admitted to contemplating suicide, and already made well above the proposed pay raise, summed up the real problem, "I do the same thing every day; I feel empty inside. I have no future."[21]

The half-measures taken by Foxconn bosses to stop the worker suicides are all window dressing. The real problem at Foxconn, and in China and the world as a whole, is the alienation and despair caused by the capitalist system. Workers do not want to toil as slaves for the bosses' profits while only getting crumbs for themselves. The only solution to the suicide problem in China is the overthrow of the capitalist class and the victory of communist revolution. Until that point, anti-suicide safety nets won't solve anything. ✪

Sources:

1 Business Week, "Foxconn Workers in China Say 'Meaningless' Life Sparks Suicides," 6/2/10.

2 Gizmodo, "Undercover Report from Foxconn's Hell Factory," 5/19/10.

continued on p. 5

Racist Israeli Cops Destroy Bedouin Village for Real-Estate Tycoons

SOUTHERN ISRAEL, JULY 27 — Some 1,500 heavily-armed Israeli cops, backed by choppers and bulldozers, demolished the "unrecognized" Palestinian-Bedouin village of Al-Araqib in southern Israel (the Bedouin Arabs are former nomads who have established their villages in the desert), leaving 40 impoverished working-class families stranded in the desert without a roof over their heads. The villagers' olive orchards, chicken coops and sheep pens, used to supplement their meager incomes, were also destroyed.

Even before its demolition, Al-Araqib's residents — like the residents of numerous other "unrecognized" Palestinian-Bedouin villages in the Negev — were denied even the most basic infrastructure and services. They lived without modern sewage facilities, with no local medical care or schooling, and had to use expensive on-site generators and plastic tanks to provide their electricity and water. The Israeli government conquered the Negev in 1948 and made it a part of Israel, claiming that the Bedouin — who have lived there for centuries — established the village "illegally" on land now belonging to the state. At the same time the Israeli government easily grants land, infrastructure and services to small Jewish settlements in the area and even to single-family "individual settlement farms" owned by rich ranchers (generally ex-Israel Defense Force ranking officers). Recently, one of these racist ranchers shot and killed a Bedouin; needless to say , he was found not guilty by the bosses' Zionist court, thus giving the green light for others to follow suit.

Demolition U.S.-Financed

The aim of this racist demolition was to pave the way for a planned ruling-class gated settlement, Hiran, A Religious–Jews Only enclave. It is financed by U.S. billionaires, including Ron Lauder, in conjunction with the racist JNF (the Zionist Jewish National Fund, which controls all the land grabbed in the 1948 and 1967 wars). In other words, the Israeli Zionist police force erased an entire village off the land as a service to real-estate tycoons .

The destruction of Al-Araqib is not an isolated incident. It is another step in the Israeli ruling class' ongoing attack on workers' housing in the service of real-estate capital, both local and foreign. This is a racist and colonialist policy — ethnic cleansing to serve the rich. The racist, ultra-nationalist Israeli regime also wants to guarantee a Jewish national supremacy in every part of the country.

Recently, thousands of Palestinian workers living in the ancient city of Jaffa (part of Tel Aviv today), and super-exploited Jewish workers in the Kfar Shalem neighborhood (established on the ruins of a Palestinian village demolished in 1948) in south Tel Aviv are threatened with eviction to make way for massive real-estate development projects in the areas. The Miami-based real-estate tycoon, Irving Moscowitz, is using the Israeli state-machine to evict many Palestinian families from the villages of Sheik Jarah and Ras al-Amud in order to clear the land for real-estate development.

The fascist Israeli state, as well as its racist ideology of Zionism, serve only the capitalists, is more than willing to act with extreme brutality and cruelty against workers when it is deemed necessary by the tycoons' interests. This government uses racism as a tool to divide the workers and turn them one against the other, all while blatantly ignoring the most basic needs of entire populations of workers.

The interest of the Israeli and Palestinian workers is, therefore, to unite and smash this fascist state-machine and place the working class in power. Only workers' communist rule would be able to provide for the needs of each and every worker in this part of the world, be that housing, education, healthcare or adequate infrastructure. Only the seizure of power by the working class will do away with all tycoons and their rotten system that breeds racism, poverty and war. ✪

Suicide Surge Universal Under Capitalism

continued from p. 4

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Workers Act vs. Bosses' Racist Healthcare Cuts

In New York the city administration is planning a 10% cut in the already under-funded public hospital system. In Chicago they already laid off hundreds of doctors, nurses and other front-line providers from the Cook County Hospital system and closed half of the County's public clinics, with further cuts planned. In Los Angeles they downsized, then closed Martin Luther King Hospital, leaving thousands without care.

All these facilities serve largely black and immigrant working-class patients, but their existence means that there is a safety net for all workers who get thrown out of work by the inevitable ups and downs of the capitalist economy. Now the politicians in the big cities are dismantling public health, just like they are destroying public schools, public housing and public transportation. They use racism of different kinds to blunt the fight-back against their attacks.

The capitalist TV and newspapers create the myth that anything with the word "public" in the name is for black people. That's one of their tricks to confuse white workers. Then they try to get black workers to go along with Obama's "health reform" with the lie that "only" immigrants will be left out in the cold when the public hospitals close. That's to build anti-immigrant racism, especially among blacks. Racism is the cutting edge of fascism, and a black "liberal" is now swinging the axe.

But many workers already see through these tricks. Demonstrations involving thousands of people have opposed these racist attacks. Workers have denounced the cuts in public meetings as well as picketing and marching outside as the rich "civic leaders" solemnly try to "save our public institutions" by downsizing and privatizing them. In California nurses' strikes have forced the politicians to make concessions by improving the ratio of nurses to patients. But like most reforms, the bosses then turned this victory into its opposite by simply reducing beds and kicking out the patients.

The unions can be a useful place to organize fight-back, but the reforms they fight for will never satisfy workers' healthcare needs. There is lots of anger about these attacks and workers need a stronger and more far-reaching counter-attack.

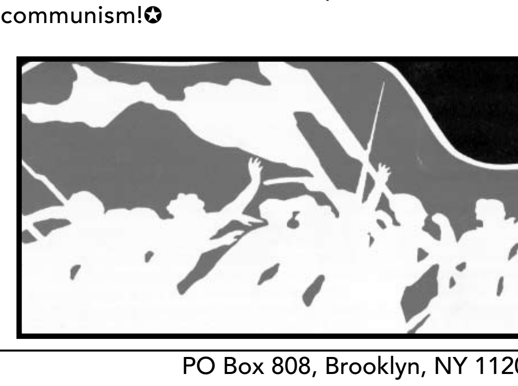
The public services under attack are the remnants of the "welfare state." Public hospitals and other things workers need to survive were created when millions of workers in the U.S. and Western Europe started getting ideas of revolution from Russian and Chinese workers in the early to mid-20th century. At that time the Soviet Union (now "Russia"), and later the People's Republic of China, were the only countries that guaranteed jobs and healthcare to all.

The capitalists in the West were scared to death of revolution in their own countries. They fought the threat of communist revolution in the West in two ways. First, they allowed a few reforms so that revolution wouldn't seem like the only alternative to the misery of capitalism. Reforms silence the workers and further bar the workers from uniting as one. Then they fired, blacklisted, arrested, beat up and killed communists who led the workers in fighting for reforms.

These measures defused and tamped down the revolutionary energy that had been building in the working class. Now, the capitalists are under more pressure to cut costs as they prepare for bigger and bigger wars. And with the return of Russia and China to capitalism, the pressure is off for making reforms, at least for the moment.

Workers need a two-pronged counterattack. We need to sharpen the contradictions of the reforms wherever we can, and we need to recruit more and more workers into the PLP. The working class needs to go all the way to communist revolution. We need to understand that anything short of destroying capitalism and replacing it with communism will not offer the future we and our children and grandchildren desperately need.

Reforms will ultimately lead back to fascism. Revolution, not reform, is the only solution to the horrors of capitalism. Fight for communism!✪



LETTERS

Airport Workers Fight Nazi 'English-only' Law

This is a follow-up letter in regards to copy-cat fascist attacks on Latino immigrant workers (CHALLENGE 8/4). On July 27, a metro area suburb passed a racist vindictive law prohibiting Spanish-speaking in immigrant dealings with city government. This is pure anti-Latino racism because new immigrants applying for city jobs, public housing, public schools for their children, and city services will find themselves marginalized by the English-only law.

Many states and cities like Fremont, Nebraska have followed the lead of Apartheid Arizona. This is historically similar to fascist Germany's Nuremburg Laws.

This local racist law was passed 4-1, angering many anti-racists. One white anti-racist was thrown out of the city council meeting by the police.

The multiracial airport workers are responding to this latest racist anti-working-class attack by taking extra copies of CHALLENGE for family and friends. Also, we will pressure our union to respond to this fascist law and work in collective mass struggle to overturn it.

Only communist revolution can liberate the international working class from fascist capitalism. Capitalism needs racist nationalism to guarantee super-profits for the bosses by super-exploiting Latino workers, which lowers the wages of all workers. Communism will eliminate divisions like nationalism and borders. WE HAVE A WORLD TO WIN!

Airport Red

AFT Backs Rulers' Latest Ploy to Keep Afghan Bases

Gareth Porter, in "CounterPunch," reports that Richard Haass — president of the Council on Foreign Relations since 2003 — has written a Newsweek article on Afghanistan entitled "We're Not Winning. It's Not Worth It." He has concluded that the insurgents cannot be defeated and it would be better for the U.S. to allow the Taliban to run southern Afghanistan and for U.S. forces to withdraw to the north (where it can work closely with the Northern Alliance warlords and the corrupt Karzai regime in Kabul).

This view is apparently gaining support among ruling-class thinkers, and may gain even more traction with the recent release of thousands of pessimistic reports from the military and popular despair over the war. Obama is caught between a rock and a hard place. If he withdraws troops next year, and the Taliban and other insurgent groups gain ground, he'll be blamed for "losing Afghanistan," even though influential ruling-class thinkers say Afghanistan is already lost (barring a favorable deal with the "enemy.") If he continues to keep roughly 100,000 troops (plus tens of thousands of intelligence agents, state department functionaries and contractors) in Afghanistan, and another 50,000 in Iraq, he won't have enough troops to occupy Iran. Iran, with its huge reserves of oil and gas, has gained tremendous influence in Iraq and is an important supplier of Chinese energy needs.

Obama will likely draw increasing fire from both sides — those who think U.S. resources are being wasted, and those who think failure is unacceptable. Groups like U.S. Labor Against the War (USLAW) take a side in this ruling-class debate by stressing that a military victory is not possible while saying virtually nothing about U.S. imperialist aims in the Persian Gulf and Central Asia, or how withdrawal from Afghanistan wouldn't mean peace, but only preparation for more war.

At the recent AFT convention, USLAW representative Michael Zweig went so far as to introduce and support the AFT leadership's resolution on Afghanistan. It takes the Haass position that a military victory is no longer possible. It calls for a timetable for withdrawal, but also supports the "defeat of terrorist conspiracies" with the "limited, careful and precise use of armed forces." This endorses continued U.S. bombing and missile attacks on villages in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and many other countries of strategic importance.

Pro-worker Resolution Defeated

What was particularly vile about the USLAW role at the convention was that another local had submitted a resolution declaring the occupation "not a war in the interest of working people." They argued that the "war on terror" was a cover for "the real reasons for the war, which include control over wealth and resources," and told delegates that the U.S. military had killed tens of thousands of Afghan civilians. USLAW reps opposed that resolution and supported the leadership motion that contained no criticism of U.S. actions or its imperialist aims.

USLAW works with that section of the Democratic Party (including the AFT leadership) who worry that Afghanistan is a quagmire that will bog U.S. forces down and prevent it from carrying out the tasks necessary for its coming conflicts with China, Russia and other rivals to U.S. world dominance. USLAW will claim that the AFT endorsement of a resolution calling for withdrawal is a "victory" for the anti-war movement, when in fact it is a victory for U.S. capitalists who want to keep teachers and all workers in the dark about the truth that capitalist rivalry always leads to war.

In Afghanistan, the only profitable way out for U.S. imperialism is to strike a deal with the Taliban and other insurgent groups. The insurgents would be given a lucrative share of profits from mineral concessions, foreign aid and transit fees from the TAPI gas pipeline. In return they would approve the U.S. permanent bases and large garrison force, would help the U.S. effort against Iran, and would provide security for the TAPI pipeline. Will the Taliban hold out for a larger share or accept the deal? Neither outcome offers a better life for the Afghan people.

Anti-imperialist teacher

'Restrepo' Movie: Afghan War is 'Business-as-usual'



"We did our job and now we're going home," says a GI. This is the theme of "Restrepo," a National Geographic documentary which describes the 15-month tour of duty of an Army platoon whose job was to secure a valley in a mountainous area of Afghanistan so that a road could be built there to "help" the people of the valley.

"Restrepo" follows in the footsteps of the Oscar-winning film, "The Hurt Locker" which tells the story of caring, capable men assigned to a U.S. Army bomb-disposal unit. It brings to life the U.S. ruling-class slogan to "support the troops even if you oppose the war." But the only way to support working-class troops is for PLP to organize in the military to turn the guns around on the warmakers. The only way the working class wins is when we build a Red Army to fight for a communist revolution.

In this film we are asked to feel the camaraderie of men at war, the grief they feel at the death of one of their platoon members and their joy at the death of one of the insurgents. They all "have a job to do" and they do it without any questioning of the Afghan war or their role in it. It recalls the oft-repeated line in "The Godfather" movie that "it isn't personal, it's just business." The ruling class needs soldiers to believe this so they will continue killing their working-class brothers and sisters, in the bosses' widening wars for profit and control.

In the film, one of the Army's strategies is to win over the people in the village near their camp. The Army must apologize for the mass destruction of the villagers and their resources. The Army replaces the officer held responsible for the atrocities. His replacement meets with village elders and tells them that he won't make the same mistakes as the previous officer and that the elders should trust him.

This pushes the idea that the military as a whole is doing the right thing, and is for the villagers. By replacing the one "bad" officer, we are to believe the villagers will be protected.

After their 15-month tour of duty, the soldiers go home, but the village and its elders are still there with the insurgents and a new group of soldiers who they are supposed to trust. The U.S. troops eventually withdraw from the valley after 50 U.S. soldiers have been killed. The documentary neglects to document how many civilians and insurgents were killed or how much destruction the U.S. military caused.

"Restrepo," like "The Hurt Locker," is a description of U.S. military duty as "just another job." The men are shown as accepting the necessity of fighting imperialist wars for control of oil, oil pipelines and new-found mineral wealth. Neither the men nor the documentary questions the politics or morality of the war. Couched as "objectivity," this allows ruling-class justifications for the war to go unquestioned and therefore dominate the discussion.

We need to bring CHALLENGE'S understanding of U.S. imperialism to high school students who will be joining the military and we need to win soldiers to PLP so that these wars will not be "business as usual." Then we can make new documentaries that will tell the story of working-class rebellions and communist victories. ✪

Working-Class History: Multi-racial Unity Shut World's Largest Shipbuilder

In July 1967, one of the most stirring struggles of multi-racial working-class unity occurred when 15,000 black and white workers struck the Newport News (Va.) Shipbuilding Co., the world's largest shipbuilder. The walkout was initiated by mostly black workers in the transportation department and followed by virtually all the company's black and white workers. It eventually turned into a full-scale rebellion — similar to the big-city black rebellions that were sweeping the U.S. — against the loan companies and pawn shops surrounding the shipyard, sleazy merchants who had been bleeding the workers dry for years.

The workers had never struck before and were striking "against the national interest," given the huge Navy contracts in the middle of the Vietnam War. It occured in a state with a 350-year history of racism, going back to the first arrival of black slaves in 1609.

They faced a pro-company press, the mayor, local police, Governor, State troopers, a company union and a judge's Taft-Hartley injunction. Yet the workers, depending on their own rank-and-file leadership, organized a wildcat strike that shut the state's largest corporation tight.

Black Workers Lead a Wildcat Walkout

It began when three workers in the transportation department, two black and one white, refused overtime as a protest to press demands over grievances and unequal pay and were suspended. After a meeting of 239 mostly black workers in that department, 75 on the night shift walked out and set up a virtually all-black picket line. Although the department represented only 1% of the entire work-force, they were the main artery that kept the yard running.

The black and white workers on the incoming day shifts respected the picket line and the yard ground to a halt. The engineers on the Chesapeake & Ohio R.R. refused to move trains into the yard and the teamsters refused to drive their trucks past the wildcat picket line.

Virtually the entire yard's workers soon met and voted 4 to 1 to walk out. They defied the court injunction ordering them back. Mass picketing stopped any scabs from entering. When a cop's police car rammed the pickets, injuring two workers, the strikers launched a hail of rocks, bottles and bricks and soon the cops were huddling against a fence.

Open Rebellion: 'They attacked us like they were brothers…'

Then open rebellion ensued. Multi-racial groups of workers smashed the pawn shops and loan companies that had been bleeding then dry for years. Soon the city's entire 150-man police force with police dogs arrived and were met with a barrage of rocks and bottles. Then 3,500 strikers squared off against the cops charging with guns drawn and drove them back. One police official said the rebellion was "thoroughly integrated. [They] attacked us like they were brothers."

Nine cops were hospitalized and five police cars burnt or damaged. The state troopers were ordered out onto the battlefield and sent dozens of bloodied workers to the hospital, but the yard was still crippled.

Finally the Governor ordered out more troopers to escort scabs into the yard, wading into the pickets in brutal fashion. With no real organized leadership, increasingly violent threats from the Governor and intervention of federal mediators, the workers were forced back with only the "promise" that their grievances "would be dealt with."

But it was a historic lesson in multi-racial working-class struggle. As one worker declared, "Workers have gotta learn that they have to stand up or they're dead…" ✪

RED EYE ON THE NEWS

Below are excerpts from mainstream newspapers that may be of use for our readers. Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly, LAT=Los Angeles Times

In gov't she can't fight racism

NYT, 7/24 — No time for facts…. The important part of the Shirley Sherrod story was that we are all being sold a tragic bill of goods by the powerful forces that insist on pitting blacks, whites and other ethnic groups against one another.

Ms. Sherrod came to the realization, as she witnessed the plight of poverty-stricken white farmers in the South more than two decades ago, that the essential issue in this country "is really about those who have versus those who don't."

She explained how the wealthier classes have benefited from whites and blacks constantly being at each other's throats, and how rampant racism has insidiously kept so many struggling whites from recognizing those many things they and their families have in common with economically struggling blacks, Hispanics and so on.

Big money spreads climate lies

NYT, 7/26 — If you want to understand opposition to climate action, follow the money. The economy as a whole wouldn't be significantly hurt if we put a price on carbon, but certain industries — above all, the coal and oil industries — would. And those industries have mounted a huge disinformation campaign to protect their bottom lines.

Look at the scientists who question the consensus on climate change; look at the organizations pushing fake scandals; look at the think-tanks claiming that any effort to limit emissions would cripple the economy. Again and again, you'll find that they're on the receiving end of a pipeline of funding that starts with big energy companies....

Or look at the politicians who have been most vociferously opposed to climate action. Where do they get much of their campaign money? You already know the answer.

Early steps toward a China war

NYT, 7/27 — Beijing — The Chinese government reacted angrily on Monday to an announcement by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton that Washington might step into a long-simmering territorial dispute between China and its smaller neighbors in the South China Sea….

Mrs. Clinton apparently surprised Beijing by saying the United States had a "national interest" in seeking to mediate the dispute, which involves roughly 200 islands….

The state-run news media…described Mrs. Clinton's speech as "an attack" and a cynical effort to suppress China's aspirations – and its expanding might….

The area of contention…is an increasingly important conduit for a third of the world's maritime trade and much of the region's energy supplies. Just as compelling are the enormous deposits of oil and natural gas thought to be under the ocean floor….

"The U.S. feels like this is the time to play the political and military card since it's very difficult for them to compete with China in the economic sphere"….

In March, China warned two visiting American officials that it would not tolerate interference in the South China Sea.

'Strong borders' are murderous

NYT, 7/29 – The Pima County morgue is running out of space as the number of Latin American immigrants found dead in the deserts around Tucson has soared this year….

Arizona….law has not kept the immigrants from trying to cross hundreds of miles of desert on foot in record-breaking heat….

Human rights groups say it is the government's sustained crackdown on human smuggling that has led to more deaths.

"The more that you militarize the border, the more you push the migrant flows into more isolated and desolate areas, and people hurt or injured are just left behind."

War? What war?

NYT, 7/25 – "The army is at war, but the country is not," said David M. Kennedy, the Stanford University historian. "We have managed to create and field an armed force that can engage in very, very lethal warfare without the society in whose name it fights breaking a sweat." The result, he said, is "a moral hazard for the political leadership [can] resort to force in the knowledge that civil society will not be deeply disturbed."



Big charities can't fix capitalism

GW, 7/30 – For 14 of the last 16 years, Bill Gates has been the richest person on earth. More that a decade ago, he decided to start handing over the "large majority" of his wealth – currently around $55bn – for the foundation to distribute, so that "the people with the most urgent needs… gain the power to lift themselves out of poverty." In 2006, Warren Buffett, the third-richest person in the world, announced that he too would give a large proportion of his assets to the foundation… Accounts show an endowment of $37bn, making it the world's largest private foundation.

The internet, the modern power of celebrity, and the ease of travel to virtually anywhere in the world enjoyed by the super-rich, has made it possible for the more thoughtful, socially conscious of them – such as Gates and the financier George Soros – to become…more potent even than the previous generation of famous philanthropists, such as Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller.

However, there is a problem with the Gates Foundation…. On the ground in Africa or Asia the Foundation's immense-sounding grants are a miniscule fraction of what is required to create a fairer world. "In agriculture," says [Gates' agriculture director] Steiner, "the problem's this big" – he throws out his long arms – "and our resources are this big" – he pinches an inch of air between a finger and thumb.

MORE ITEMS AVAILABLE AT WWW.PLP.ORG

Arizona: A History of Racist Attacks and Workers' Fight-back



The racism spewing forth from Arizona's bosses and their politicians is not new. In order to drive down all workers' wages and keep them fighting each other rather than uniting, capitalism has always singled out a section of the working class for greater oppression. With increasing fascism in Arizona and worldwide (see CHALLENGE, 8/4), it is helpful to review past history, during which every governor and president has been committed to enforcing capitalism and using racism to divide the working class. This emphasizes the working class's one task: to unite and destroy capitalism and the racism on which it depends.

Copper Bosses Feared Miners Militancy and Unity

In 1903, many strikes and other militant actions occurred in Arizona's mines. Perhaps the most important was the Morenci strike, organized by three workers, two Mexican and one Italian. Armed workers seized company offices and shut the mine for three days. The three organizers were jailed, but the workers' unity — as well as further strikes in Arizona and Mexico against U.S. copper companies) — scared the bosses. The latter began a campaign of intimidation and harassment.

One tactic was accusing Mexican union organizers of being "horse thieves," a very serious crime then. On August 20, 1914, Mexican unionists so charged fought with a posse of anti-unionist and anti-Mexican forces. The LA Times reported that four white men and twelve Mexicans were killed. Infuriated at the death of posse members, white residents from the town of Ray invaded the Mexican section, driving men, women and children from their homes. Reports said that the racists "were searching the hills near Ray… bent upon killing every Mexican they meet." Agitation to exclude Mexicans continued throughout that decade.

Racism Follows the Flag

In 1914, the rulers passed the Arizona Anti-Alien Labor Law requiring 80% of a firm's employees to be native-born. Arizona's newspapers equated the law to patriotism, editorializing, "The Flag and Eighty Per Cent." The U.S. Supreme Court ruled the law unconstitutional, holding it would exclude immigrants from Arizona, saying immigrants had the right to work and that the law discriminated against lawful residents.

Then, as now, a section of the ruling class understood that U.S. capitalists need immigrant labor, both documented and undocumented, to exploit for super-profits. Currently, this Obama-led section wants to marginalize immigrants, to enforce lower wages and terrible living conditions, not deport them. During that era, union organizing was increasing rapidly, but in the Arizona mines, the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers (IUMMSW) did little to support it. (Twenty years later this union became communist-led and organized fierce strikes against the copper barons.)

Racism towards miners from Mexico and fear of their militancy kept the UMMSW at bay, but the International Workers of the World (IWW) emerged, organizing 1,000 members into its Local 800. On June 26, 1917, the local struck for improved working conditions, higher wages and an end to discrimination against union members. The copper bosses responded violently to this threat to their profits.

On July 5, about 2,000 vigilantes rounded up more than 1,000 workers and family members, loaded them into railroad cars (provided by the railroad bosses), and dumped them in the middle of New Mexico's desert, 200 miles away. Very few ever returned to their Bisbee homes.

The copper bosses not only went after union members, but also immigrants from Mexico, who they feared were becoming more militant as unionization spread. In a campaign to rid the mines of Mexican workers, in April 1921, they shipped up to 1,800 Mexican men, women and children by train from Morenci Southern station to the U.S.-Mexico border. Simultaneously, tens of thousands were deported from the agricultural fields, and literally dumped across the border.

Bosses Still Using Racism to Divide Workers

There are striking similarities between Arizona's past and present. Arizona Governor Jan Brewer recently claimed "discovery" of "bodies in the desert" either "buried or beheaded," linking the crime to "illegal" immigration. Even some of Arizona's compliant press disputed her claim. Brewer also claimed that "illegal aliens" were "muling" — transporting drugs into the U.S.

Meanwhile, Jason Ready, a well-known neo-Nazi, has begun organizing armed vigilantes to patrol the border. Ready is a close associate of Arizona State Senator Russell Pearce, the sponsor of Arizona's current racist law, and of Maricopa fascist Sheriff Joe Arpaio. All have close ties with the Federation of American Immigration Reform.

Brewer, Arizona's vile racist governor, and Barack Obama, whose Justice Department sued to nullify certain aspects of Arizona's law, are more alike than different. They have different tactics and serve different bosses, but both are wholeheartedly committed to maintaining and defending the racist capitalist system. Brewer's repulsiveness is evident. But Obama continues to enjoy popular support while further militarizing the U.S.-Mexico border. He has ordered use of the same Predator drones that murder innocent Afghans and Pakistanis to monitor the border and recently dispatched 1,000 National Guard troops to stations in California, Arizona and Texas.

As CHALLENGE indicated (8/4), the Obama administration has increased deportations to a level exceeding the Bush years. Obama is a wolf in sheep's clothing, smiling while slaughtering workers at the border and worldwide.

The working class has nothing to gain from supporting either side in this battle. The fascists openly target our Latino brothers and sisters while the liberal politicians hide their racism behind the DREAM Act and Comprehensive Immigration Reform, both tactics to coerce young immigrants into the U.S. military (see CHALLENGE Supplement, 6/23) Neither group wants workers to understand that our class has no nations. We have a common international enemy, the bosses, and only by uniting across their borders can we defeat them. ✪

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Communist-led Mine-Mill union led strike depicted in movie 'Salt of the Earth.' Women were key force for victory (photo at top).